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ABSTRACT

The case study reported in this thesis describes the first year of a new Extension agent's employment, as reported by the author-employee. The study includes a review of literature relating to induction training programs and to experiential learning. The case study is presented as a means of incorporating the experiences of a new Extension employee in an induction training program as well as to suggest methods of improving on-the-job training. Described in the study are eight general principles that may help other new Extension workers: (1) be willing to ask for help; (2) an Extension agent can never know everything; (3) develop and retain sensitivity to the local culture; (4) informal communication systems are efficient; (5) an Extension agent has unique opportunities to help people grow; (6) remain empathetic; (7) involving people strengthens ownership; and (8) teamwork can build opportunities. Documentation is provided that describes the study as a naturalistic inquiry. An 81-item bibliography is included. (Author/KC)

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A NATURALISTIC INQUIRY OF A NEW EXTENSION EMPLOYEE'S FIRST YEAR: A CASE STUDY WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR INDUCTION TRAINING

ED 290862

By

Sarah Ruth Henson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

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A NATURALISTIC INQUIRY OF A NEW EXTENSION EMPLOYEE'S FIRST YEAR: A CASE STUDY WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR INDUCTION TRAINING

Abstract

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Washington State University
December 1986

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The study includes a review of literature relating to induction training programs and to experiential learning. The case study is presented as a means of incorporating the experiences of a new Extension employee in an induction training program.

The case study focuses on a new Extension employee's first year on the job. Eight general principles are described by the case study. These are: 1) be willing to ask for help; 2) an Extension agent can never know everything; 3) develop and retain sensitivity to the local culture; 4) informal communication systems are efficient; 5) an Extension agent has unique opportunities to help people grow; 6) remain empathetic; 7) involving people strengthens ownership; and 8) teamwork can build opportunities. Documentation is provided which describes the study as a naturalistic inquiry.

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DEDICATION

To Jim Henson and Jan Noel

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

An induction training program can result in benefit to both the new employee and the organization. The first sections of this chapter describe induction training programs. These are followed by discussion of the structure of an induction program and the proposed program: a case study of a new Extension employee's first year on the job. The content of the study is grounded in the literature and author's experiences as a new Extension agent.

INDUCTION PROGRAMS

Every organization faces the task of preparing new employees to do their jobs. Even with the most stringent recruitment, selection and placement procedures, new employees require some type of introduction to their position and responsibilities. Induction training is the means of accomplishing this introduction. Induction is used throughout this study as synonymous with orientation, and defined as a process or way of becoming familiar with and adapting to a new situation or environment. The induction process begins the first day on the job and continues through the first year of employment.

The "National Policy Guidelines for Staff Development, Cooperative Extension Service," (1977) states that the objectives of an induction program are:

1. To enable beginning Extension employees to accept their responsibilities with confidence;
2. To understand what is expected of them; and
3. To feel secure in their work environment (1977:10).

Similarly, an earlier Cooperative Extension report, "National Policy Statement on Staff Training and Development" (1968) states the objectives of an induction program are: to enable beginning Extension employees to adjust to their full professional responsibilities with dispatch and good feeling; to understand what is expected of them; to have the information necessary to carry out their assignments; and to feel secure in their work (1968:6). The Policy Statement also notes (1968:3): "The effectiveness of the educational programs of Extension will depend on the abilities and skills of its professional staff." These descriptions indicate a need for new employees to establish a familiarity, confidence and understanding from which to develop as effective Extension educators.

Van Dersal (1974:16) observes that "An organization is likely to be successful in proportion to the fullest continuing efforts of all the people who compose it." He lists two objectives for induction training:

1. To introduce new employees to the organization and show them what part they will play in it;
2. To get new employees into full production in their own self-development (Van Dersal, (1974).

New employees and the organization both benefit, as new employees become effective, productive individuals. There is an economic gain for the organization as individuals become productive more rapidly; and as individuals learn to measure up to standards for performance their value is increased to the organization ("National Policy Statement on Staff Training and Development," 1968).

Shilt, writing from a business management perspective, reports that the simplest argument in favor of an early training (induction) program is that an organization pays for a training program whether it has one or not. He notes, "In a company which has no formal training program, the employees do a great deal of learning on the company's time and premises. Hence, this learning, which is

accompanied by costly errors, is done at company expense" (1974:444).

Jahns views early training of employees as an organizational socialization process. "One of its (training) functions is to socialize individuals to the organization and help them to develop appropriate expectations and norms for role performance in their specific positions. By helping employees to better respond to the organization's needs, training contributes to organizational stability" (1981:103).

Katz lists three types of human behavior that contribute to a stable, functioning organization:

1. People must be induced to enter and remain within the organization;
2. They must carry out their role assignments in a dependable fashion;
3. There must be innovative and spontaneous activity in achieving organizational objectives which go beyond role expectations (Katz, 1960).

Training is one means by which people gain control of their jobs and so contribute to organizational productivity and stability. Laird (1978) states that any output (goods or services) requires that people are in control of their jobs. Steps by which people gain control of their jobs are:

1. Define the right or standard way to perform the tasks;
2. Secure people to perform these tasks;
3. Find out their inventory of skills or how much of the task they can already do;
4. Train them in the difference;
5. Test or evaluate to make sure they can perform their tasks at minimum standards; and
6. Give them time and material with which to perform their tasks (1978:7).

Induction training should assist people to gain control of their jobs and to develop a broad understanding of the organization and also of their own capabilities and potentials as individuals within the organization.

PROGRAM FORMALITY

Jahns notes that training programs may be formalized by the organization "as part of its overall training and personnel development effort" (1981:104). In addition to formal programs, individuals may systematically plan their own development program "for purposes congruent with organizational needs or with their own aspirations for personal and career growth and development" (1981:104).

Miller and Verduin (1979) note the "underlying assumption for staff development is that adults can and will grow through learning for the good of their profession, organization and themselves" (1979:5). They observe that the way in which learning programs, which include induction training, are organized and delivered influences the effectiveness and accuracy of the content and methodology of what is taught and learned.

Research in adult education and adult learning reinforces the observation that design and delivery of material has an impact on learning. As an adult education activity, induction programs should consider the characteristics of adults as learners:

1. Adults learn in different ways and have varying motivations for learning;
2. Adult orientation to learning is usually life-centered, so the appropriate units for organizing learning are life situations (Tough, 1979; Knowles, 1973);
3. Adults bring with them a rich reservoir of experience which both facilitates and hinders further learning;
4. Adults may not have participated in formal learning programs for some time and may find

a role as a learner an unfamiliar and possibly uncomfortable one.

The learning and life experiences which adults bring to new learning and to new jobs will have an influence on their ability and willingness to learn new material and methods. The varied backgrounds of new Extension employees, plus the characteristics of individual adults as learners indicate that it may be difficult to develop induction programs which meet the needs of all new employees and are reasonable in terms of time and expense. A combination of self-directed and formal programs may be optimal.

A formal educational program usually consists of a structured, systematic sequence of material. The content, means of presentation and evaluation are, in general, determined by those responsible for the program. In contrast, informal programs are usually directed by the staff members themselves. Informal learning programs are characterized as self-directed and problem-centered by Miller and Verduin (1979).

Regardless of how comprehensive the formal induction program, the first year for new Extension employees is a period of learning: an informal learning situation. "Experiential learning" is described as learning on the job. Experiential learning is learning that occurs when

changes in judgments, feelings, knowledge or skills results for a particular person as a result of living through an event or events. Experiential learning is an integral part of everyday life. Weinstein and Fantini (1970) observe that learning from experience is to make backward and forward connections between things, which result in understanding. Understanding is the discovery of connections between things.

Understanding may occur for new employees as they begin to link those principles and competencies discussed in a formal induction program with the actual situations they find on their jobs. A combination of formal and experiential learning may be desirable to enhance the ability of new employees to make meaning from their experience on the job.

A formal or cognitive program can greatly reduce the amount of time and effort necessary to learn something. Experiential learning is time-consuming because people have to repeat actions in sufficient circumstances to develop a generalization from experience. Also, people vary widely in their ability to infer a generalization from a set of experiences, which may limit their ability to apply learning to new circumstances (Coleman, 1976).

THE STRUCTURE OF AN INDUCTION PROGRAM

While all new employees learn on the job, this learning is greatly influenced by the supervision they receive. The first year on the job can be a good teacher if the induction program planner insures:

1. New experiences are provided;
2. Negative outcomes are minimized;
3. Timing of experiences promotes learning in useful sequence;
4. Confusion and frustration are prevented;
5. Feedback for correcting faulty performance is available; and
6. Choices of alternative in performance are made in systematic ways (Harris, 1980).

Griffin (1981:13) lists two major problems with on-the-job instruction:

1. Lack of structure or a long-range plan; and
2. Opportunity to learn both the bad and the good.

Armstrong and Lorentzem (1982:132) indicate that on-the-job training has advantages of actuality, immediacy and relevance. The disadvantage is that the effectiveness of learning is strongly influenced by the quality of supervision received. The supervisor of the new employee must be experienced, reliable, interested and able to train

a new person. The necessity of high quality supervision of a new worker has important implications for the selection and preparation of those who will have this responsibility.

THE PROPOSED PROGRAM

Formal programs are widely utilized for induction training, and the first year on the job is recognized as a period of learning and adjustment for new employees. Linking what they find in the field with the expectations the organization has of them, and the content of their formal induction program may be a frustrating process. Some organizations provide opportunities for new employees to spend time with "trainer agents," encourage internships, or establish a mentoring program. These methods are designed to allow the new employee to gain an introduction to the job through the help of another person or persons.

The approach explored in this study is similar to these approaches, but focuses on the written experiences of a new Extension employee. Written material, based on the experiences of a new Extension employee during the first year of employment, can provide another means of sharing information about what new employees may face on the job, and help them to link those experiences with the formal induction program, and to expectations the organization may have of them. Grounded in the actual experiences of a new

Extension employee, this material can help to provide a link between formal induction programs and the actual job.

PERSPECTIVE AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study has evolved as a result of the experiences of the author. The author entered employment with a solid background in subject matter and adult education theory, and with six months experience as a graduate student Extension intern. Although prepared academically and through the internship, once employed, the author felt that she lacked sufficient knowledge of situations and potential problems faced on the job. Discussion with Extension Staff specialists and Extension faculty suggested that a lack of knowledge about what a new Extension employee faces on the job was widespread among new employees. This lack constitutes the problem addressed in the study.

The problem is that new Extension employees may enter employment with limited knowledge about situations and problems they can face as new employees. The writer believes that reviewing the experiences of other Extension employees new on the job may assist a new employee in preparing for and adjusting to the new position. The need for the research is supported by the "National Policy Statement on Staff Training and Development" (1968) which

notes that training will provide returns to both the organization and to the individual.

PURPOSE: A NATURALISTIC INQUIRY OF A NEW COOPERATIVE EXTENSION EMPLOYEE'S FIRST YEAR: A CASE STUDY WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR INDUCTION TRAINING

The purpose of the study is to present the experiences of one new Cooperative Extension employee, the author, in case study form. The case study is intended as an aid or supplement to new employee induction training programs.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To develop a case study reporting the author's experiences as a new Extension employee;
2. To derive a set of principles from the case study;
3. To provide recommendations for those with responsibilities for new Extension employee induction training.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a naturalistic paradigm of inquiry as the basis for conducting research and development of the case study. Williams and Raush (Flynn-McPherson, 1983:3) define naturalistic inquiry as "The investigation of phenomena within and in relation to their naturally occurring context."

The author acted as the instrument of inquiry and focused the study on an analysis of her own experience. The setting was the actual job and emphasis was on discovery and documentation of her experiences in that job context, with the intent that those experiences could prove useful to other new Extension employees.

Chapter I is the introduction and literature review in support of experiential learning, and use of the written case study as an induction program aid.

Chapter II considers naturalistic methodology. Particular emphasis is on establishing trustworthiness, the human instrument of inquiry, and the case study as a reporting method.

Chapter III is the case study.

Chapter IV includes reflections about the study and recommendations for those having responsibility for induction training of new Cooperative Extension employees. The chapter also includes a review of the case study. The review has as its purpose to draw out general principles from the case study which are demonstrated by the author's experience.

Chapter V is the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further study.

ASSUMPTIONS

Description of the assumptions made for the study will facilitate understanding of material included and excluded and procedural decisions.

1. Induction training programs can benefit from the inclusion of material which is based on the experiences of a new Extension employee.
2. All new Extension employees learn on the job during their first year of employment.
3. A case study in written form will be useful to new Extension employees.
4. Those utilizing and reviewing the case study will be familiar with the Extension organization, mission, and methods.

BOUNDARIES/LIMITATIONS

1. The competencies and experiences described may not reflect those of all new Extension employees, or Extension organizations.
2. The case study is based on the experiences of one new Extension Agriculture Agent, the author.
3. Although some examples will reflect the experiences of a woman in a nontraditional

role, no effort was made to focus on women in nontraditional roles.

4. The case study is based on the experiences of the author and does not include secondary sources of new Extension employee experiences.

DEFINITIONS

AGENT: Extension employee located in a county.

APPLICABILITY/TRANSFERABILITY: (Fittingness) degree to which the findings of one inquiry may fit in another situation and setting.

AUDIT TRAIL: sufficient documentation to allow an external auditor to examine the processes by which data were collected and analyzed, and interpretations made.

BOUNDING: the process of setting limits to the inquiry and determining what is or is not relevant.

CASE STUDY: a written scenario providing a thick description of the events in a particular setting over time.

CES: abbreviation for Cooperative Extension Service.

CLOSURE: decision to discontinue collecting additional information.

COMPETENCE: having suitable skill, experience, or qualification for some purpose.

COMPETENCY: description of a desired skill, experience or qualification for some purpose.

CONFIRMABILITY AUDIT: a process by which a second person or team reviews data and interpretations to certify that data exist in support of interpretations and conclusions.

CONSISTENCY/DEPENDABILITY: degree to which the findings of the inquiry could be consistently repeated if the inquiry was replicated with the same, or similar context and conditions.

DEPENDABILITY AUDIT: a process by which a second person or team reviews the decisions and actions of the inquirer to verify that the study was undertaken in a competent manner so as to be credible.

DESCRIPTION/THICK DESCRIPTION: written material presenting the setting and information which provides the means of correlating the study with real life and makes it possible for persons in other settings to

make a determination of fittingness in other situations.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: learning that occurs when changes in judgments, feelings, knowledge or skills result for a particular person from living through an event or events.

INDUCTION: the act of installing a new employee in a job position.

INDUCTION TRAINING: (same as orientation training) a process or way of becoming familiar with or adapting to a new situation or environment.

INQUIRER: person conducting the investigation or inquiry.

JOB STANDARDS: what the individual is expected to do and at what level of success or output he is expected to do the job.

LEARNER: generic term for people in the learning situation, includes student, participant and trainee.

LEARNING: process of changing knowledge, skill or attitude.

MEMBER CHECK: a means of verifying facets of the study through review by members or representatives of the critical audience.

MENTOR: a sage or experienced counselor.

NEUTRALITY/CONFIRMABILITY: degree to which the findings of an inquiry are the result of the subjects and conditions of the inquiry and not of the biases, motives and interests of the inquirer.

REFLEXIVITY: process by which the author reveals the underlying assumptions which caused him to present findings in a certain way.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT: organized learning over a period of time to provide the possibility of performance change within a job setting.

STAKEHOLDER/STAKEHOLDING AUDIENCE: an individual or group with some common characteristic having an interest in the outcome or impact of the inquiry.

TRAINING: instruction that is provided in order to improve performance on the job.

TRIANGULATION: a process by which a variety of data sources are used to cross-check data and interpretations.

TRUTH VALUE/CREDIBILITY: the degree of truth to the findings of a particular inquiry for the setting and subjects described.

SUMMARY

Chapter I discusses induction training in depth. The purpose of the study was to develop a case study recording a new Extension worker's first year on the job. This was based in the author's belief that induction programs can be strengthened from including material based on the actual experiences of a new worker.

The literature reviewed includes induction training and experiential learning. The case study is proposed as a means of linking on-the-job experience with an induction program in order to allow new workers to gain from the experience of others.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Chapter II focuses on aspects of the naturalistic inquiry, particularly on establishing trustworthiness, the human instrument of inquiry, and the case study as a reporting method.

AN EMERGENT PROBLEM

In a naturalistic inquiry, it is common to have the problem emerge from observation or from experience. The problem addressed by this study "emerged" as the author gained experience as a new Extension employee. As mentioned in the limitations/boundaries section, the author's experiences provided the data from which the study developed.

INTRODUCTION

Guba and Lincoln (1981:xi) describe the naturalistic inquiry approach as a paradigm or model using methods drawn from ethnography, anthropology and sociological field studies. They argue that a naturalistic paradigm may be more useful than a scientific model when studying human behavior, primarily because human behavior is always changing, changeable and context-bound. Flynn-McPherson (1985:51) observes that the naturalistic paradigm proceeds

with the assumptions that there are multiple realities, that relationships develop between the inquirer and the phenomena being studied, and that the identification of truths is bound within the context of the situation.

An inquirer using a scientific paradigm assumes that reality can be divided into orderly subsystems which exist in definable relationships, that the inquirer will have no effect on the phenomena being studied (and the phenomena being studied will have no effect on the inquirer), and that similarities between phenomena allow development of generalizations. Understanding these three sets of assumptions is important for understanding the naturalistic approach.

THREE SETS OF ASSUMPTIONS

Assumptions about reality, assumptions about the subject-inquirer relationship and assumptions about the nature of truth are described below.

1. Assumptions about reality: Assumptions about reality from a scientific paradigm indicate that systems can be fragmented into orderly subsystems, which exist in definable relationships. The physical world can be meaningfully divided into variables.

Naturalistic inquirers assume every perspective of reality is as true and valid as any other. Variables are integrally related and phenomena are more likely to diverge than to converge as they are explored. Variables are related and interrelated. Complex human actions and reactions cannot be described in terms of discrete variables.

2. Assumptions about the subject-inquirer relationship: The scientific paradigm assumes that the inquirer will have no effect on the phenomena being studied and that the phenomena being studied will have no effect on the inquirer.

The naturalistic inquirer assumes that "all phenomena are characterized by interactivity" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:58). A relationship can and often does exist between the phenomena and the inquirer, and the perceptions of the inquirer can influence the information collected. "Investigators not only find their subjects reactive but are themselves changed by the

quality of their interaction with subjects" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:81).

3. Assumptions about the nature of truth: Scientific inquirers seek similarities between examples of phenomena in order to develop generalizations. General laws provide a knowledge base.

The complex interactions between the inquirer and the phenomena studied, and dynamic and multiple realities result in the naturalistic inquirer favoring "thick descriptions" rather than generalizations. Enough information must exist about one situation to suggest that findings may be transferred to another. Naturalistic inquiry often focuses on the understanding of particular events or cases. Human behavior is viewed as heavily mediated by the context in which it occurs.

PLANNING FOR TRUSTWORTHINESS

Establishing trust in the outcomes of the inquiry is a methodological exercise that requires careful planning and consideration throughout the study. Four basic criteria to

consider for trustworthiness are truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality.

1. Truth Value: How can one establish confidence in the "truth" of the findings of a particular inquiry for the subjects with which--and the context within which--the inquiry was carried out?
2. Applicability: How can one determine the degree to which the findings of a particular inquiry may have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects?
3. Consistency: How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be consistently repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same or similar context?
4. Neutrality: How can one establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are a function solely of the subjects and conditions of the inquiry and not of the biases, motives and interests of the inquirer?

Trustworthiness considerations are the central framework for developing the study in a way that allows an evaluator to trust the outcomes and interpretations. The four basic criteria can be addressed by methodology.

Methods for fostering truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality are described below, along with the actions taken in this study.

TRUTH VALUE/CREDIBILITY

Naturalistic inquirers are concerned with testing the credibility of their findings and interpretations with peers and the sources from which their data were drawn. Several methods are useful to inquirers to foster truth value. During the study, the inquirer should spend enough time "on site" to offset distortions arising from the inquirer's presence, and to enable the inquirer to make a realistic evaluation of typical and atypical qualities. Termed "prolonged engagement" this method can be illustrated by the inquirer spending two years on site before writing, in the example of this study.

Time on site also contributes to a second method useful during the study: persistent observation. While prolonged engagement relates to distortions arising from the inquirer's presence, persistent observation allows identification of pervasive as well as atypical qualities. This identification leads to understanding of what is characteristic of the situation, as well as what may be atypical but important.

Peer debriefing and member checks are methods which involve the inquirer evaluating perceptions with the help of others, and are two other methods useful in assuring truth value of a study. The author tested insights by traveling from the area to allow detachment from the site, and interacted with individuals performing a debriefing function. Peer debriefing allowed the inquirer to not only test insights, but also reevaluate her perspective. While prolonged engagement is useful, the inquirer feared that total immersion without the opportunity to test insights and perspective with someone else could influence the trustworthiness of the study.

Member checks are a means of testing data and interpretations continuously with members of the stakeholders during the study, and again after the field part of the study and before casting into final form. This may be the most important action the inquirer can take to facilitate credibility.

Member checks were made with representatives of the stakeholding audience. In this study, three of the stakeholders were Extension staff development specialists who also had roles as the Thesis Committee. In this regard (dual roles by stakeholders), this study may differ from other naturalistic inquiries. The fourth person performing as a member check was a new Cooperative Extension worker.

In the process of developing and reviewing the study, the process of establishing structural corroboration of coherence is useful. This involved testing data and interpretations against all others to be certain there were no internal conflicts or contradictions. This process proved useful in this study because early drafts were found to be incomplete and to contain contradictions and ambiguity. Through assessing the study for structural coherence, the inquirer was able to revise in order to strengthen the study.

To summarize, methods useful to the inquirer to facilitate credibility are prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, member checks and establishing structural coherence. One additional method, triangulation, is a means by which a variety of data sources are used to cross-check data and interpretations. As mentioned again in a later section, triangulation occurred throughout the study as the perspectives of the stakeholders in the member checks allowed ongoing evaluation.

APPLICABILITY/TRANSFERABILITY

Naturalistic inquirers believe that all social and behavioral phenomena are context-bound, so the inquirer must make statements that are descriptive or interpretive

of a given context. Transferability refers to whether the conditions under which what is believed to be true in one context may be true in a second context. Transferability between contexts may be possible because of certain similarities between them. Rather than generalizations that will hold in all times and places, emphasis is on developing working hypotheses which may be transferred from one context to another depending on the degree of "fit" between the contexts.

"Fittingness could be best assessed through the use of a thick description of each of the contexts involved. Comparison of these thick descriptions would make it possible to determine the degree of fittingness" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:327).

Naturalistic inquirers believe that phenomena are context bound, so statements must be descriptive of a single context. The purpose of the thick description is to provide information in sufficient detail for someone in another setting to evaluate for transfer. Two methods are particularly useful in building a thick description: purposeful sampling and thick descriptive data.

Purposeful sampling is useful in studies involving interviewing as a means of data collection. Purposeful sampling is intended to maximize the range of information collected, governed by constantly emerging insights about

importance and relevance. Rather than sampling only representative or typical aspects (which are useful if developing generalizations) the inquirer will seek the atypical in order to expand the field of information collected. In this study, interviewing techniques were not used, instead, collecting thick descriptive data was used to allow a reader to compare the context of the study and other possible contexts.

Transferability depends on the description including sufficient and necessary information to test the degree of fittingness. In this study, the thick description provides the means for someone else to interpret whether the material in the thesis can be used in another context. In the case study, general discussion is followed by principles illustrated by the section. Through the wide variety of observations documented in the case study it is possible to assess it for usefulness or "fit" in another setting.

Because the case study was conceived after nearly two years of observation had already occurred, daily or weekly logs and summaries of field notes were not maintained. These would have been useful thick descriptive data. Since these logs were not maintained during the field observation, the inquirer attempted to include sufficient

detail in the case study to allow assessment for "fit" in other contexts.

To review, two methods useful in fostering applicability are purposeful sampling and collecting thick descriptive data. Purposeful sampling is a process of sampling particularly useful in interviewing in which the inquirer seeks atypical or unusual responses in order to broaden the set of information collected. Thick descriptive data is data recorded in sufficient detail for a person in another setting to evaluate whether the material could be applied or would "fit" in another context or setting.

CONSISTENCY/DEPENDABILITY

A third aspect of trustworthiness is that of consistency or dependability. Consistency considers the issue of replicability. The most useful and important method for demonstrating consistency is the audit.

An audit trail is a prerequisite for checking a study for consistency. An audit trail is sufficient documentation to allow an external auditor to examine the processes by which data were collected and analyzed and interpretations made. External auditors or judges should be able to verify that the procedures used and data collected make sense given the situation the inquirer was

working in. Figure I, Audit Trail Summary, describes actions taken to address the aspects of trustworthiness.

The Trustworthiness Planning Worksheet, Figure II, summarizes methods used during and after the study. This summary provides an external auditor with information useful in evaluating consistency by documenting the procedures used. Knowledge of procedures used allows assessment of the study for replicability.

In addition to an audit trail, stepwise replication is a means of building consistency. Stepwise replication is a method by which two teams of inquirers are involved in the study and compare observations. This thesis was original work by a single author so this method was not used in the study.

Overlap means that different methods were used in tandem. Two or more methods are teamed in such a way that the weaknesses of one are compensated by the strengths of another. If using multiple methods, the inquirer should be able to report that these methods were selected because they were complimentary, or for whatever reason they were chosen. Overlap methods were not used in this study.

After the study, inquirers should arrange for a dependability audit. This is a process by which a second person or team reviews the decisions and actions of the inquirer to verify that the study was undertaken in a

Figure I. AUDIT TRAIL SUMMARY

ASPECT	ACTION	DESCRIPTION
TRUTH VALUE	Prolonged Engagement	On Site 2 years
	Persistent Observation	On Site 2 years
	Peer Debriefing	Discussion with Lisa, Ron, Tom, Jim, Others
	Member Checks	Ongoing and summative with stakeholders/ Thesis Committee
APPLICABILITY	Thick Description	Detailed descriptions of events during the first year on the job
CONSISTENCY	Audit Trail	Audit Trail Summary, Trustworthiness Planning Worksheet
NEUTRALITY	Reflexivity	Chapter II descriptions of procedures and actions
		Chapter I assumptions
	Member Checks	Audits throughout study by stakeholders

competent manner so as to be credible. In this inquiry, the Thesis Committee performed this function.

NEUTRALITY/CONFIRMABILITY

The neutrality aspect of trustworthiness addresses the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are the result of the subjects and conditions of the inquiry and not of the biases, motives and interests of the inquirer. Although inquirers can influence objectivity, neutrality/confirmability means that inquirers must report their data in such a way that it can be confirmed from other sources if necessary. The burden is shifted from the investigators and their methods to the confirmability of the data produced.

The aspect of neutrality was of particular concern to the inquirer in this study because as an individual rather than team inquiry, the inquirer was not able to collaborate with others on findings. However, member checks with Extension stakeholders provided a valuable and ongoing assessment of the study for neutrality. In addition, the inquirer practiced reflexivity. Reflexivity is revealing the underlying assumptions which caused the inquirer to formulate a set of questions a certain way or present findings in a certain way.

In this study, observations and an example program were presented in the form of a case study. The inquirer felt that material should be presented in a format which was concise and contained an example for the new worker to review. This reflects the inquirer's own personal preferences, but was acceptable to the stakeholders performing member checks.

After the study is complete, an inquirer should arrange for a confirmability audit to insure that data exist in support of the interpretations, and that the interpretations have been made in ways consistent with the available data. The reviews of the Thesis Committee insured that these two criteria were met.

Triangulation is another method useful in fostering neutrality. Triangulation involves reviewing data from a number of sources and perspectives to document validity of claims. In this study, the stakeholder provided varying perspectives which were useful in checking claims.

TRUSTWORTHINESS PLANNING WORKSHEET

The methods useful in planning for trustworthiness described can be summarized in a planning worksheet. The Trustworthiness Planning Worksheet (Figure II) provides a summary of methods and of chosen actions for conducting the inquiry.

Figure II. TRUSTWORTHINESS PLANNING WORKSHEET

METHODS

ASPECT	DURING STUDY	AFTER STUDY
TRUTH VALUE	Prolonged Engagement Persistent Observation Peer Debriefing Member Checks Structural Corroboration	Member Checks
APPLICABILITY	Purposeful Sampling Thick Description	Thick Description
CONSISTENCY	Overlap Stepwise Replication Audit Trail	Dependability Audit
NEUTRALITY	Triangulation Reflexivity	Confirmability Audit

ACTION & STAKEHOLDERS

ASPECT	DURING STUDY	AFTER STUDY
TRUTH VALUE	Prolonged Engagement--author Persistent Observation--author, Lisa Peer Debriefing Member Checks--author, Tom, Ron, Jim, Lisa	Member Checks--Tom, Ron, Jim, Lisa
APPLICABILITY	Thick Description--author	Thick Description--author
CONSISTENCY	Audit Trail--author	Dependability Audit-- Tom, Ron, Jim, Lisa
NEUTRALITY	Reflexivity--author	Confirmability Audit--Ron, Jim, Lisa

The "Actions" columns show the methods selected for this study. A need for member checks and repeat audits suggested that identifying key stakeholders would be useful. These people are noted in the Action columns. The inquirer felt that the actions listed in the Action columns would provide for trustworthiness.

As well as providing a summary of methods and actions chosen to foster trustworthiness, Figure II provided a visual summarization for the author. This worksheet served as a summary for the author and is included as a part of the audit trail. It also proved useful as a means of checking back through the methodology sections for internal consistency. Twice the author found inconsistencies as a result of checking the sections against the worksheet.

Although a Trustworthiness Planning Worksheet might not be of value for all inquirers, the author was both attempting to become familiar with naturalistic inquiry methodology and applying that methodology in the study. The Trustworthiness Planning Worksheet reduced confusion for the author.

Planning for trustworthiness considers the four aspects of truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. The Trustworthiness Planning Worksheet is a means by which the author organized information to clarify methodolgy. In addition to aspects of trustworthiness,

methodology includes the instrument used to collect information and the reporting method.

THE HUMAN INSTRUMENT

The author was the instrument of inquiry in this study. As the instrument of inquiry the human being poses unique opportunities as well as unique problems. Several characteristics of the human instrument can be noted and considered for the development of a study which is objective but "human."

Human instruments are:

1. Contextually and interpersonally interactive: They are responsive to both the environment and the people who create that environment. The human being is both interpersonally and environmentally interactive.
2. Broadly adaptable: They are broadly adaptive as data-gathering devices. Ability to adapt to differing contexts and to differing informational needs enables inquirers to explore the context until either they sense they have reached a topic of concern (a relevant issue) or until they are satisfied that the subject can provide them with no new information.

3. Holistic emphasis: A holistic emphasis is possible because inquirers are capable of a variety of constructs, both conscious and unconscious. This allows perceptions of a "real world" or continuous setting.
4. Broad knowledge base: Knowledge base expansion is possible because the realm of "knowing" or observing extends beyond propositional knowledge into the realm of the felt and unconscious.
5. Processual immediacy: Refers to the human ability to process data immediately upon acquisition. This may enable inquirers to generate insights and new hypotheses.
6. Opportunities for clarification and summation: These opportunities exist because inquirers can tell immediately if statements are not clear or require amplification or if they have heard and recorded the information correctly.
7. An opportunity to explore responses: Atypical or idiosyncratic responses can be explored by the human observer. Recognition of atypical responses allows utilization of them for increased understanding.

While these features make human inquirers uniquely suitable to social research, other factors can undermine the reliability of the human instrument. The human being "can also be guilty of misinterpretation--either because of lack of experience, lack of familiarity, or just failure to see the entire scene or hear the complete remark, and over-simplification, which can result...in ascribing meanings to incidents and conversations that do not reflect their full intent" (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:147).

In recording the experiences of the first year on the job, the study was strengthened by many of the items listed, and possibly weakened by others. Examples in the case study illustrate interactivity. The author had to not only become familiar with, and adapt to, the new job setting, but also the various people in that environment.

As the author spent time on the job she came to sense topics of relevance or importance to include in the case study. While demonstrating broad adaptability, a reviewer might argue that the author misinterpreted. For example, the author felt that the experiences on the cattle round-up were an initiation of a new person. It could be viewed as misinterpretation by arguing that the men were simply preoccupied with the job at hand and too busy to talk.

In documenting feelings and perceptions, knowledge base expansion occurred. Similarly, experiences were

processed as they occurred, expanding knowledge. In writing the case study these experiences had to be re-examined, resulting in expansion of self-knowledge, as in the feelings of frustration about the piles of memos.

As listed, the human instrument of inquiry is a valuable tool in an inquiry. A feature of acting as a human instrument became clear to the author in writing and re-writing the case study: the need to be willing and capable of self-evaluation. Questioning one's own perceptions and observations for neutrality, and avoiding over-simplification are two additional aspects of acting as an instrument of inquiry.

BOUNDING AND CLOSURE

Setting limitations to the study and determining when to discontinue collecting information are questions of bounding and closure respectively. Bounding includes decisions about what to include or omit as well as setting general limitations. Guba and Lincoln (1981) observe that a major bounding factor in any study is the problem statement. This study was bounded by the problem statement, and involved continuous decisions about what to include and to omit through the revisions process.

Closure refers to when to discontinue collecting information. Three situations may suggest closure is appropriate:

1. When there are no new situations to observe;
2. When successive examination of sources yields redundancy or produces diminishing return; or
3. When the area "feels" integrated (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:100).

In this study, another factor influenced closure and duration of data collection: the academic time-frame for completion for graduation. Although this external indicator of time for closure was important, the inquirer had spent two years on site and was finding increasing redundancy in additional information collected. While graduation requirements influenced the decision for closure, the inquirer and stakeholders were in agreement that the study was complete.

THE CASE STUDY AS A REPORTING METHOD

A case study is a written scenario which provides a thick description of the events in a particular setting over time. As a reporting method for a naturalistic inquiry, the case study is uniquely suitable.

Advantages to the case study as a reporting tool are:

1. The case study provides the thick description important in naturalistic inquiry. This information makes it possible for someone in another setting to evaluate the information for fittingness.
2. The case study is grounded. It provides an experiential perspective.
3. The case study is holistic and lifelike. It presents a picture which is credible to the actual audiences and can be presented in the language of those audiences.
4. The case study simplifies the range of data that one is asked to consider. The reader is provided with the essential information in a focused, conversational format.
5. The case study focuses the reader's attention and illuminates meanings.
6. The case study can communicate more than can be said in propositional language. The case study builds on the "tacit knowledge" of readers.

There are also disadvantages of using the case study as a reporting tool. These include:

1. Case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions.
2. The case study depends heavily on the interpretations of the writer and on the selection of the information to be presented. It is difficult to detect writer bias or errors in judgment.
3. The case study presents one slice of a situation or event and so relies on the ability of the inquirer to present comprehensive and objective material, and depends on the reader to transfer and utilize the material.
4. It is difficult to maintain anonymity: subjects, settings, programs and events can often be easily identified with the actual elements.
5. The writer can bias the study, necessitating the use of an outside auditor.

The use of the case study has both advantages and disadvantages, as outlined above. As a reporting method, it enabled presentation of material in a conversational manner, and inclusion of material grounded in the author's experience. In addition, the case study form allowed

development of a thick description, which was important for transferability to other situations.

SUMMARY

As a reporting tool, the case study has numerous advantages. As mentioned, there are also disadvantages. The case study format was selected because it provided this study with a method to capsulize information into a form which could allow its use by new Cooperative Extension workers and those with responsibility for induction training of new workers. While developed and checked according to naturalistic inquiry methodology, as described, the information needed to be in a form which enabled it to be removed from the study in general to be used. This could be thought of as similar to removing worksheets from the binder including the entire lesson plan.

Member checks were mentioned throughout the sections on trustworthiness and represent the most important action taken to insure the study was trustworthy. Member checks were utilized in every part of the study to foster credibility, to assess the potential for transferability, to determine whether a sufficient audit trail existed to assure replicability, and to assess whether the study was

done in a manner consistent with the principles of neutrality.

The study was bounded by the problem statement: to present the experiences of one new Cooperative Extension employee in case study form. To meet needs which could be both general and specific, the case study includes an introduction to adjusting to the new job, and a set of general principles derived from the sections.

The case study is written in first person. This was not covered in the methodology but was a decision made by the inquirer to "personalize" the study.

Following the case study, in Chapter III, is Chapter IV, "Reflections and Recommendations For Induction Training." The choice to adopt a naturalistic inquiry paradigm shapes Chapter IV as well as Chapter III. The content of Chapter IV is an expression of reflexivity. The Recommendations are meant for those with responsibility for induction training of new employees. Chapter V, the last chapter, includes a section describing needs for further study and conclusions.

The methodology used in the study provides the philosophic and practical framework for the study, and the case study in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

A CASE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

I started work as an Extension Agriculture Agent on July 5, 1984. My interest area was staff development, and as I gained experience on the job I realized that a case study or chronicle of what a new Extension agent faces on the job could be useful to other new agents. At first I thought I was probably the only agent new in my state who had a good subject-matter background and program development and adult education training. However, I had no real idea how to get started in the county.

As I talked to other new agents and staff development specialists, I realized that my feelings were not that unique; many new agents seemed to have some problems linking what they learned in a formal program with what they were actually experiencing in the field. As I looked into the topic more, I found references in the literature which supported my observations that formal programs (if there is a formal program) may not adequately prepare new workers for their jobs. New Extension workers often enter employment with good backgrounds in their subject-matter field, but with little practical experience in developing educational programs for adults (Cole, 1983).

Consequently, I have written this case study in the hope that it would give new Extension workers, and even prospective Extension workers, an idea of a few of the situations they may face on the job during the first year. It was written from the perspective of my second year as an agent, and looking back and reflecting on my first year. These reflections were then distilled into a series of principles in the hope they would help future new agents.

Parts of the case study were easy for me to write. However, some of the writing required that I reflect back and try to evaluate my feelings and motives. This proved to be difficult at times. I also was faced with the challenge of trying to write a case study which would be useful to other new Extension agents. The study as a whole was written according to naturalistic inquiry methodology.

"Applicability" is the term naturalistic inquirers use to evaluate whether a study has sufficient detail and appropriate content to be useful, or transferable, to other situations. According to this methodology, the study must include sufficient information for another person in another setting to be able to use it. The descriptions must be sufficiently "thick" for the content to be evaluated for transferability. It was my hope that the information would be useful and interesting and that it

would make the transition into county work a bit smoother for new agents.

The beginning of the case study includes sections entitled Getting Acquainted, Initiation, 4-H, and A Few Normal Days. These are followed by a beef cattle program development example. The example emphasizes the use of committees for clientele involvement in program development and implementation. I recognize that this is perhaps bias, but one which is supported strongly in Extension program development nationwide and in the program development literature.

In sum, it was my hope that this study would prove useful and interesting. Although many states have formal induction training programs for new workers, my state does not have any type of induction program. It is my belief that we can learn through experience and that we can learn from the experience of others. The writer's beliefs are documented in this case study.

GETTING ACQUAINTED

My first few days on the job flew by in a whirlwind of introductions, office procedures, keys, forms and files. I met the employees in the courthouse, learned where to park, and was shown the filing system and my office.

My office was little more than a cubicle with several file cabinets full of "current information" from 1912 to present. I found USDA bulletins from the 30's and 40's mostly, and current bulletins scattered throughout every drawer. Later, when I began trying to make sense of the files and sorting material I faced the dilemma of what to throw away and what to save for purely historical reasons.

The office had not had an agriculture agent for six months and the desk top was several inches thick with memos, letters, magazines and telephone inquiry slips. There was also a large collection of insects, leaves, and grain in varying stages of decay. Some of the samples must have been brought in shortly after the last agent left and had never been forwarded on to other personnel. In addition, some of them had evidently spent several days on the dashboard of a truck before even making it into the office.

As I went through the pile on my desk I had to establish criteria in terms of what material to throw away, material to file, and material I needed to call someone else about. I wanted to be able to figure it all out for myself, but I realized that there were peculiarities about the area and production systems that I was not familiar with.

Calling the specialists proved to be more complicated than I had expected. I had received a listing of names and specialists and was told that they were all helpful. I called two "crop specialists" before I figured out that one on the list was cereals, one on the list was sugar beets, one on the list was alfalfa, one on the list was potatoes, etc. I felt naive, and was embarrassed that I didn't know that they were crop-specific. They were very helpful and put me at ease by acknowledging that most new agents took some time to understand all the specialist assignments.

Getting acquainted with the county meant more than figuring out the files and the office systems. It meant going out in the field and meeting people and getting "the lay of the land." In retrospect, I wish that I had spent two days riding around with the United Parcel Service delivery truck in order to become familiar with the farms. It would have been one way to figure out which farms belong to whom, and begin to get a feel for land ownership. As part of an effort to meet people, I called one of the major producers of each of the commodities grown and asked if I could stop by and talk. (The secretary was able to tell me the name of one of the leading growers in each crop.) By talking to them, I was able to learn what Extension had done with the growers in the past and what these individuals would like to see done. The major

growers are often influential in the community and I felt that others might share their opinions and observations. Visiting with these growers also gave me some credibility as I was seen with them and they introduced me to other growers.

Land ownership in the rural county was much more complex than I had expected. I stopped one day to ask directions to the Turner place, and the fellow asked me if I wanted the Turner Place or the place the Turner's lived. I wanted the place the Turners lived. As it turned out, I didn't want the Turner Place, I wanted the Somsen Place. The Turners leased their place to the Bennetts, so the Turner Place was where the Bennetts lived. The Turners lived on the old Somsen Place which they leased from Bob and Nancy Nolan. I was told I "ought to know where that is because Nancy Nolan leads a 4-H club and was a Somsen before she married Clint Nolan's boy." I wondered sometimes if I would ever get the land and kinship arrangements figured out. I hated to ask what I thought sounded like stupid questions, but I didn't have a choice. As it turned out, most people I talked to were happy to help me out with directions, and were sympathetic about my confusion.

Part of my getting acquainted process involved interacting with the Fair Board. In some counties, the

agent is automatically the secretary of the Fair Board. This tradition had been broken in my county several years before, but it was still the agent's responsibility to arrange for judges for some of the county fair classes. Unfortunately, I didn't know that.

Shortly after I began work I received a call from the secretary of the Fair Board. She asked for the names of the beef, dairy, sheep, swine and vegetable judges. I obligingly said that I didn't know, but would ask the secretary. She became very agitated and said that I was supposed to have lined them up in May (I started work July 5). She became more and more upset and finally said that I would "probably not be able to get decent judges at this late date." She said that she couldn't understand why I had refused to handle this in a timely way. My explanation about not starting work until July 5 and not being told about this responsibility did not help. She said "in this county the agent <u>always</u> gets those judges..." Thanks to the help of agents in surrounding counties, I was able to come up with judges for the classes. I initially felt upset because I thought I was being accused of dereliction of a duty I didn't even know about. But I realized later that the fair is the big county event of the year and maybe the secretary thought I wasn't treating the event with the consideration it deserved. The county fair, rodeos and

church activities were all very high county priorities which were not in my direct experience. Respect for local culture is extremely important, although it took me a year in the county to figure out what exactly this represented.

Another part of getting acquainted involves meeting and developing a relationship with agents in other counties and with specialist staff. My county was isolated geographically so there wasn't much opportunity for interaction except at district meetings. There was quite a bit of initial wariness on the part of the other agents. Although they were helpful when I had a specific question, they remained aloof for a long time. Part of this was because they weren't sure how to relate to a woman agriculture agent. Not only was a woman in an agriculture agent position a new idea for the people in the county, it was a new idea for my co-workers in Extension. At times, I couldn't help but wish we had some sort of "buddy system" in place where a new agent could have a mentor or someone to talk to, who could perform introductions and act as a legitimizer. I didn't have one, and it took a long time to develop working relationships with some of the other agents. Most were willing to work on a professional level, but I also wanted friends, which took much longer. I had to make the first overtures of friendship for a long time.

I guess I hadn't been "the new kid on the block" for quite a while.

The area in which I worked had a very strong church culture which also took time to adjust to. Certain nights of the week were off limits for meetings and church events took precedence over all others. In one area of the county the night of open calf roping at the arena was a determinant of meetings and programs. As I discovered more about the local culture, I had to reassess my own assumptions in order to build a county program that "fit" with the people.

I learned three principles which are evident from this small section: ask for help if you need it from residents or colleagues; a second principle--you don't and never will know it all; and remain sensitive to the local culture because there are customs and value placed on things with which you are unacquainted.

INITIATION

I imagine that every new agent goes through some experience that can be considered "initiation" to the county. Mine took place in September 1984 during the annual round-up of cattle from the summer ranges.

Part of my responsibility involved membership on the county Agriculture Stabilization and Conservation Service

(ASCS) Board. During one meeting, a cattleman asked if I would like to come out and ride round-up. I said yes, but would have to borrow a horse. He said fine. So shortly before the round-up date I called him and again expressed interest in going. He hedged a little, but finally said to meet him at the camp and he would have a horse for me.

I arrived at the camp at 6:30 a.m. according to instructions, and my "friend" came around the side of a barn leading a horse. He made some comment about it being a nice day, and disappeared back around the barn. I saddled up and waited for someone to tell me where to go and what to do. Meanwhile, everyone else (all men) was saddled up and forming into groups. One group after another galloped out of camp in various directions. Finally, a fellow rode over and said he "guessed" I could ride with them. I could hear comments flying around, "Who the hell is she?" The answer, "She's the new county agent."

As we rode off to the hills, I made attempts at conversation--all of which were met with blank looks. I knew I was with a hard-core group when they wouldn't even talk about their horses or dogs.

I rode with that group all day and no one said a word to me except "head off that cow." I finally became so sore and tired and grumpy I quit trying to talk. When we

reached camp, my "friend" came back around the barn and led the horse away. That night soaking in the bathtub, I vowed that I wouldn't go back; it wasn't worth it!

Next morning, however, I drug myself out of bed into my truck and drove back out to camp. They were obviously surprised to see me. My friend led the horse back over and I saddled up. The same fellow said he "guessed" I could ride with them, and I figured I was in for another long day.

Later that afternoon we were sorting cows back near the corrals. An elderly man rode over and stopped his horse next to mine. He spit on the ground a few times and then asked if I "had ridden far enough yet to get sore and tired." I laughed and told him that I had ridden that far yesterday. He sat there with me for awhile and gradually a few other cowboys began drifting over. By the end of the day I had met several of the men, talked to several more, and was feeling better about the whole ordeal. The old man coming over had opened up the avenue for them to come over and talk.

The next week I had several people stop and mention they had heard I went out and rode with the association. The next year people asked if I was going out to ride round-up again. I realized that if I hadn't gone back out that second day when they were just as tired and sore as I

was, I would have been labeled a quitter. Because I went back out, I gained some respect and passed what turned out to be a very important initiation.

Every new agent goes through an initiation period or rite which begins acceptance by county residents. This section illustrates that you have to earn respect to get it, and also demonstrates the speed of the grapevine. I later learned that a few well placed phone calls provided better promotion than newspaper or radio and mailings combined.

4-H

The 4-H youth program is a responsibility shared by most agents in some amount. I split the 4-H responsibility in the county with the home economist. She handled the home economics and related miscellaneous projects and I handled agriculture and ag-related miscellaneous projects. Most of my work centered around the animal project areas: sheep, beef, swine and horse.

When I arrived in the county we had an overall 4-H Leader's Council and informal Market Animal and Horse Councils. I am a firm believer in using committees and councils for program development and administration of the 4-H programs, but these councils were a source of incredible frustration to me. The Leader's Council was

composed of ten people, three of whom were 4-H club leaders. Five of the others were homemakers and businessmen interested in the program, and I decided the other two were members because they just liked to attend meetings.

Eventually I realized that part of the reason the 4-H Horse Council, for example, never accomplished anything was because they didn't have anything to accomplish. They selected a judge for the 4-H Horse Show, but nothing else.

As we met I asked them what they wanted to be doing. More and more ideas surfaced...leader's training, queen clinics, showmanship workshops, and judging contests. We developed a list and I asked who would be willing to help out with the various activities. Gradually the program grew, but they had met for so long without doing anything "fun and exciting" that they weren't sure how to start. The ideas were there, but they needed to hear that their ideas were worthwhile and to have someone act as a catalyst.

As I worked more and more with the administration of 4-H programs, I realized it is just as much a program for adults as it is for youth. I saw individuals grow and learn and gain confidence and skills through teaching 4-H. Two young women I asked to help with a program were sure they couldn't do it because they had never done anything

like it before. But when once put in a non-threatening position with a high probability of success, they were ready for the next opportunity.

I realized through working with the volunteer councils that working effectively requires the ability to assume various roles. In some meetings I had to provide a leadership role. In others I needed to be passive and let the group struggle to a consensus. My primary role was as a facilitator or enabler. I came from a family of people who would do things themselves to "save time" and "increase efficiency." I had to become aware of and curb this tendency or I would overwhelm a group. Sometimes it was awfully hard to keep my mouth shut.

While I came on the job expecting to provide leadership, I found that this task meant drawing abilities out of others--facilitating their growth. My leadership style became not individual, but collaborative.

From working with the 4-H program, both with kids and volunteer leaders, a single principle or fact stands out: as Extension workers we have a myriad of opportunities to help people grow. Sometimes it requires some creativity in devising jobs or positions for people, but those efforts pay off.

Of course there were a fair share of people who led 4-H clubs without a whole lot of commitment or even real

interest. And there were some vocal critics of the way the councils operated and made decisions. Some of these people could be involved and would change their attitudes, some would not.

A FEW NORMAL DAYS

Every agent can tell "war stories" about life on the job. Extension work changes daily and there is no way to predict what the next day will bring. A few examples...

One day a boy came in the office carrying a vile smelling paper bag. The county had paid a bounty on badgers and he had a bag of badger ears and wanted to claim his money. We didn't handle the bounties, (I didn't even know if they still paid them) so called the Fish and Game officer. He arrived to inspect the ears, and asked the boy where he had gotten them. The boy evasively said that he ran traplines. After some questioning, he admitted that he and the officer's son were in partnership and had turned the same ears in the week before. The officer's son had taken them out of the truck and they were hoping to get the other Fish and Game officer who wouldn't remember the ears. We never heard what happened to the boys, but the officer's son certainly would have heard about their crime operation.

One day a woman called the office and wanted to know the gestation period for rats, chickens, geese, dogs, cats,

burros and ferrets. I looked up the information and asked if she would mind telling me what she was going to use the information for. She said that she was writing a letter to the editor to describe what farm animals are capable of accomplishing in a period of time equivalent to the last state legislative session.

Pigeon calls were common in the summer. A barber called one day and wanted a method to kill pigeons because they were roosting in the eaves above the door to his shop. He claimed that they were making the sidewalk below so slick that he was losing customers.

A second pigeon question was from a woman who wanted a method to trap or poison pigeons in the attic of her home. Then she wanted recipes for cooking them. I explained that she would not want to cook pigeons that she had poisoned, and referred the recipe part of her question to the home economist.

A fellow from an environmental group called one day and wanted to know exactly how many animals died in the county last year. I asked what kind of animals: Dogs? Cats? Cows? He wanted numbers on everything. I told him I couldn't even make a guess.

Extension work is a job from which you can never escape. I would have people call me at home and ask if the conference room was booked for the third Tuesday of next

month. Or to ask how many articles a child in first year crochet project had to make to enter her project at the county fair. Similarly, I would be stopped in the grocery store and post office.

An Extension agent is told over and over that she is an educator, but the line between "education" and "service" is often hazy at best. Much of my time was spent simply answering questions about chemicals, pigeons, insects, etc. Somehow I had had a vision of award-winning workshops and informal clinics at the coffee shop. Answering fifteen calls a day about armyworms was not what I had expected.

A certain amount of the job was referral too. The Forest Service, clerk's office, health or sheriff's department were common referrals. We were called when people didn't know who else to call.

I learned through the first year that until you are an Extension agent you never realize exactly how many things can go wrong with someone's raspberries, wheat, lawn, or whatever. This can best be summarized as a principle of remaining open-minded or, put another way, expanding your ability to remain empathetic. An example is the woman who called once a week to find out how often she should dust her dogs for ticks. Every week it was an emergency. Or a fellow whose trees had to be seen today, not tomorrow. The

problems were very real to the people calling and each had to be treated with care and respect.

SUMMARY

While Extension work is demanding, it is also rewarding. There are long days of work but a sense of satisfaction for a job well done.

These sections have laid some background concerning what a new Extension worker may experience. The following sections outline aspects of an Extension beef program. This example has two important features: people involvement and field demonstrations.

Neither involving people in Extension program development nor demonstrations are new. In fact, both have served as the historic backbone of the Extension Service. This example illustrates how these approaches worked in one county program.

To review, the general principles illustrated by these sections are: be willing to ask for help; an Extension agent can never know everything; develop and retain sensitivity to the local culture; informal communication systems are efficient; an Extension agent has unique opportunities to help people grow; and try to remain empathetic.

A BEEF PRODUCTION EXAMPLE

When I arrived in the county I found amid the pile of letters, one from the state Extension director. In it, he welcomed me to the county and thanked me in advance for what he was sure would be a "dynamic leadership" in the state beef production program. I didn't even know what the state beef program was. I forgot about it until a month later when I received notice of a district beef planning meeting. I was instructed to attend and bring the members of my county committee.

I approached total despair that day...I couldn't even find any files on the beef program. As luck would have it, I discovered by talking to the secretary, that I had "inherited" a county beef committee. And when I called two of them, they already knew about the meeting. This was before my "initiation" though, so none of them would ride with me (or invite me to ride with them) to the meeting.

As I became involved in the project it seemed to illustrate approaches which could be useful to new agents and in any subject matter.

PEOPLE INVOLVEMENT

The key to the program was a high degree of people involvement. Committees were used to define and prioritize

problems of concern to area producers. These concerns then provided the focus for Extension programs.

Committees are not unusual or remarkable. But these committees were composed of not only producers, but also the other people producers go to for advice: veterinarians, bankers, cattle association and industry representatives, and allied industry people. The linking of these people in teams allowed identification of problems wide in scope and grounded in teamwork.

As I worked with these committees, the power of multi-disciplinary teams became increasingly evident. Rather than approaching a problem narrowly, an appraisal of the whole "production system" was possible.

I was fortunate to "inherit" a good committee, well acquainted with Extension and with each other. I also received help with the committee from an Extension person they knew and trusted. When building a committee a new Extension worker may want to talk to agents in surrounding counties who may be familiar with both the people and the political structure of the county.

The problems prioritized by the committees provided the objectives for a field demonstration project. Field demonstrations are not new to Extension, nor have they lost their appeal. Researchers from the University were added to the committees and provided the technical background to

demonstrate what campus was doing to address producer problems.

To work successfully and build credibility with committee members it is necessary to review your own interests and abilities. The first key to using committees in program development is to make sure that you are willing to ask for, and respond to, input. It is also important to recognize whether you are willing to share credit for accomplishments with committee members.

In working on the beef production project, several points became evident. First, involving clientele in program development strengthens ownership by clientele. Through planning and implementing a project it becomes "their" project.

Too often the other people clientele approach for advice are viewed as competitors. Pooling knowledge and perspectives can build dynamic programs. There is also the opportunity to pool resources and skills. Teamwork can build opportunities.

CONCLUSION

While it is difficult to generalize across subject-matter areas, many of these situations will be faced by a new worker. I realized eventually that others had had the same questions I did, and probably would in the future.

Hopefully these experiences will help a new worker to adjust more quickly, and to feel less isolated.

I felt frustrated, naive, confused and just plain stupid sometimes. I also felt a tremendous amount of satisfaction and pride. As I entered my second year of Extension work I felt good about my position and myself--but there were rough spots during that first year. As I gained experience and confidence I, and my program, grew.

CHAPTER IV

REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDUCTION TRAINING

THE AUDIT TRAIL

As a naturalistic inquiry, providing documentation for trustworthiness was an important part of the study. Figure I, The Audit Trail Summary, provides a means of reviewing the actions taken by the author to build trustworthiness. Methods useful for the study are outlined on Figure II, The Trustworthiness Planning Worksheet, and described in detail in Chapter II. A brief examination of the actions taken follows below.

The aspect of Truth Value was addressed by four actions: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, and member checks.

Prolonged engagement and persistent observation both met by two years on site prior to the initiation of the study. While some events described may have occurred in the second year, care was taken to describe events relating to adjustment to the position by the new worker.

Peer debriefing occurred in committee meetings with the Thesis Committee, in telephone conversations with Lisa, another new Extension worker, and in informal settings on the college campus. The author traveled to the University once per year for a class and this provided an opportunity

to interact with other adult education practitioners and Extension faculty.

Member checks were both on-going as the study developed over time, and summative, as the final product was reviewed for acceptability.

Applicability was fostered by the inclusion of detailed information, sufficiently "thick" for someone in another setting to evaluate the study for "fit." To broaden the possibilities of fit, the sections in the case study included summaries of general principles illustrated by the section. Inclusion of these principles allows persons with various backgrounds to identify aspects of the dialog which relate broadly and beyond agriculture or 4-H.

The Audit Trail Summary provides one means of evaluating consistency. The Trustworthiness Planning Worksheet is another means. Consistency relates to the degree to which the findings of the study could be replicated under similar conditions. Figure I and Figure II outline methodology and the case study outlines experiences and settings.

Neutrality is demonstrated by the author outlining the methods and actions taken to develop a trustworthy study. Neutrality also refers to developing a study which has not been biased by the author. The practice of revealing procedures, as described in Chapter II, provides a means of

having information to check that the study was conducted in an appropriate manner without bias by the author. The process of member checks with the Thesis Committee also provided an opportunity to evaluate the study for neutrality. Although not described as an action specific for auditing neutrality in the literature, it was a practice useful for this aspect of the study, so was included on Figure I.

A primary action addressing neutrality is the practice of reflexivity. This is defined in Chapter I as revealing the underlying assumptions which led the author to develop a study a certain way. The assumptions listed in Chapter I are the main basis for the study and the manner in which the study was developed.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

After each section in Chapter III is a set of general principles which the section illustrates. To review these, they are grouped below:

1. Be willing to ask for help;
2. An Extension agent can never know everything;
3. Develop and retain sensitivity to the local culture;
4. Informal communication systems are efficient;

5. An Extension agent has unique opportunities to help people grow;
6. Remain empathetic;
7. Involving people strengthens ownership;
8. Teamwork can build opportunities.

These are only one set of the possible principles which could be derived from the case study. Others probably exist but the author felt that these summarized aspects of her experience which could be most helpful to other new agents.

As discussed in the case study, it may be difficult for a new Extension worker to ask for help from others. Closely allied to this is the fact that an agent can never know everything. The author found these principles to apply because she perceived herself in a role which necessitated having answers to questions. Later after a second year on the job, she realized that her role might more accurately be described as one of having the ability to find solutions not necessarily having them available for instant recall. A new person wants to be perceived as self-sufficient and knowledgeable.

Understanding characteristics of local culture takes time in the county setting. Annual round-up of range cattle, the county fair and church activities were all

aspects of the county culture with which the author had to become familiar.

As evident by the example that people asked the author about round-up only the next week, the existing "grapevine" communication systems can be very effective. During the first year on the job, the author was becoming acquainted with this.

The opportunities to help people grow were some of the most rewarding aspects of the author's first year on the job. Extension work is work with people; and the chance to see and help people grow, like the young women who had never been asked to help before, is rewarding.

Chapter III mentions the difficulty of remaining empathetic to the last of many callers with the same problem, as with the armyworms. Sometimes the author would perceive questions as trivial, but acted with the respect due to a person with what they considered to be a major concern.

The beef program example discusses the involvement of a wide range of people. Through involvement in program planning, it becomes "their" program. Involving people also provides opportunities for team building.

Teamwork in the beef program example involved representatives of a wide segment of the cattle industry (veterinarians, ranchers, cattle association

representatives, bankers and others) working together to identify problems or opportunities which could provide the basis for Extension Programs.

These general principles gleaned from the case study are a set which capture some of the aspects of a new worker's experience. The actual experiences of a new worker will vary, but these principles may apply to new workers with any subject matter assignment.

A CRITIQUE OF THE CASE STUDY

Decisions about closure are faced in any inquiry. In writing the case study, the author had difficulty prioritizing items to include and to make a decision about closure. The inquirer was reluctant to say that the content was complete because so many events and actions could be recorded from a new Extension worker's first year on the job. The naturalistic inquiry methodology, particularly member checks, was extremely valuable in determining completeness and relevance of the set of observations. As the author struggled with decisions about inclusion and exclusion, the auditors provided a fresh perspective. Until this point in the study the author had not fully realized the benefits to this procedure.

Because the study was a thesis it was the original work of a single author. A team approach to developing the

case study would have added additional experience and amplified the material. The fact that the case study includes only the experience of the author is a limitation and possible point of criticism, but was considered in the review by auditors.

Another point of consideration for naturalistic inquirers is providing anonymity for those described. The author did this by careful review and name changes when names were used. The example beef program was difficult to disguise; however, specific counties and people were not listed except by generic title in order to preserve anonymity.

In developing an audit trail, daily or weekly logs, field notes, tests or nonhuman instruments used, and written transcripts are often included as evidence of thick descriptive data. This study was not initiated until the second year on site and does not include any of this material. This fact provides a major criticism of the study, but was not something the author could prevent. Rather than attempting to reproduce a journal or log for documentation, the author had to rely on the experience and insights of the stakeholders to verify that the material was relevant and realistic. The acceptance of the thesis indicates that the material was satisfactory.

RECOMMENDATIONS: INDUCTION TRAINING PROGRAMS

At least three recommendations for induction training can be derived from the study and the case study example:

1. Provide some type of planned induction experience;
2. Allow new employees to learn from the experiences of others; and
3. Assist new employees to develop relationships with colleagues and clientele.

Chapter I reviews the literature in support of induction training and indicates that induction programs result in benefit to both the organization and the individual. The first chapter also includes a discussion of experiential learning which provides the groundwork for the case study.

This study suggests that the case study in Chapter III is a useful means of allowing new employees to learn from the experiences of another new employee. Other opportunities may exist, such as the assignment of an employee in a nearby county to act in a mentor role.

The supervisor, an agent in a nearby county, or someone else could also assist new employees to meet and develop relationships with both clientele and Extension colleagues.

Because state Extension organizations differ in the manner by which they introduce new employees to their positions, various means of addressing these three recommendations will exist. Each organization would have to develop a planned induction program. This study provides background in support of these three recommendations.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

SUMMARY

The problem addressed by the study is that new Extension workers may enter employment with limited knowledge about the situations and problems they can face on the job. The purpose of the study was to present the experiences of one new Cooperative Extension employee, the author, in case study form.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To develop a case study reporting the author's experiences as a new Extension employee;
2. To derive a set of principles from the case study;
3. To provide recommendations for those with responsibility for new Extension employee induction training.

Chapter III addresses objective one. Objectives two and three are addressed in Chapter IV.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations For Further Study are in this chapter.

To summarize, the study presented a rationale for induction training programs and suggested that since adults

learn from experience and from the experiences of others, this could provide a basis for the case study. As an induction training tool, the case study adds the experiences of a new Extension worker to an induction program. These experiences may assist new workers to anticipate events they may face on the job, and also provide a means of linking experience with the formal training program.

The case study is written in sections, with each section followed by one or two general principles which the section illustrates.

In Chapter IV, "Reflections and Recommendations for Induction Training," are included three recommendations which are derived from the study and case study example.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The study developed here would be amplified by the inclusion of material from more than one new Extension worker. A team study of the first year of Extension work could provide additional information and perspective to a case study.

Case studies in particular subject matter areas might better enable the new Extension worker to relate to the content of case studies. This would allow specialization

in home economics, agriculture, 4-H youth, community development or the assigned subject matter area.

More research on the case study as a reporting method and format and procedures for developing case studies would be helpful. Formats may differ depending on the intended use of the study, but a manual or collection of styles could prove helpful to future researchers.

The author found the naturalistic inquiry methodology extremely helpful, but was partially through the study before she felt she really understood it. This research approach has tremendous potential value for researchers in the social sciences, but the author found the literature available difficult to read and understand. A summary or condensation of naturalistic inquiry methodology and practical examples of use would prove useful to persons seeking to understand the principles but having difficulty with original sources.

To summarize, several areas with potential for further study have surfaced through the development of this study. Four opportunities for research identified by this study are:

1. Development of a case study similar to the one included in this study, but written by a team of new Extension workers.

2. Development of case studies in particular subject matters, rather than general.
3. Development of a manual or collection of case studies or examples which provide guidelines for developing case studies as reports.
4. A summary of naturalistic inquiry methodology and philosophy written to allow a person with no familiarity to become acquainted with the methodology and to assess it for application.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a rationale for planned induction training and for experiential learning in Chapter I, and utilizes naturalistic inquiry methodology for the development of the study and the case study example. The study provided the author the opportunity to familiarize herself with these concepts and to become comfortable in using them. In writing the case study, the procedures generated the items listed as recommendations for further study.

Writing for new Extension workers proved to be more difficult than the author first expected. The assessment of experience and documentation of that experience had to be constantly evaluated through the member checks. It was difficult to remain vigilant about protecting the anonymity

of those described. Becoming familiar with naturalistic inquiry methodology and with the case study as a reporting method involved more reading and research than the author had initially expected.

In concluding the study, several aspects of the process are worthy of mention. The author realized that the study developed could perhaps have been best developed through a team effort. Naturalistic inquiries often feature teams in order to provide a broader perspective. The author learned that defining the study and having a clear picture of what the inquirer has set out to do, will clarify procedures and development. The author also realized that it is easy to underestimate the time and effort required to become familiar with the methodology chosen and to insure that a study is conducted in an acceptable manner.

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